

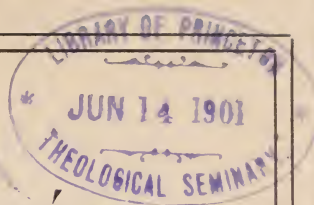
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Neglected Arabia



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The Arabian Mission

Quarterly Letters from the Field



Number Thirty-seven, January to March, 1901

Busrab

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QUARTERLY LETTERS FROM THE ARABIAN MISSION

January-March, 1901.

BUSRAH.

REV. FRED J. BARNY.

This quarter has seemed a very short one for us at Busrah, as just about one-half of it was taken up by our attendance at the Annual Meeting at Bahrein and the traveling connected therewith. We left here on the twelfth of January, the days from New Year's day to that date being fully occupied in getting the books in order, taking stock of the Scriptures and educational books on hand, and making preparations for the journey. We had nearly a fortnight at Bahrein, profitable, enjoyable and busy days of which an account appears elsewhere. We returned on the last day of the month, and after completing the ten days of quarantine, half of the quarter, as said, was gone. The ten days of quarantine seemed to be no easier to endure than they were on former occasions. They were long, dreary days of enforced idleness which

*The Annual
Meeting.*

seemed the harder to endure since so long a time is quite unnecessary, the steamer on arrival here having been ten days away from the last infected port, and also since the natives, who by their filthy habits are most liable to carry the plague, systematically evade the quarantine. As there seem to be no indications that the

plague in India is dying out, rather as it seems to
Quarantine. be getting worse, there are no hopes that this annoying feature of life and work at Busrah will have an end in the near future or in fact an end at all.

I have several times expressed the hope that for this year an additional missionary would be assigned to this station. At the Annual Meeting Mr. Wiersum was assigned here to prepare himself for the second language examination and to do such touring as he could without interfering with his studies. We have arranged a plan of tours which we think will meet the needs of the

outstations, giving them each his presence for
The Tour of several months during the year, and also en-
Mr. Wiersum. abling him to devote sufficient time to systematic study. While away on tours he will also be learning, *i. e.*, he will be getting a hold on the colloquial, a thing of no secondary importance. At this writing he is away at Nasariyeh, having traveled thither by the way of Kut, and from there across to the outstation on the Euphrates. When starting upon this tour he met with the characteristic difficulties that we all have to overcome. He had his *bellam* or open boat, which answers for a rowing or sailing boat, engaged to take him up the Euphrates, and was ready for setting out on the morning of the day appointed, but the owner of the boat did not appear until the middle of the morning, and as usual wanted to delay another day. By much parleying he induced him to promise to start by noon, and then it seemed that everything was at last settled. However, after half an hour the man returned, gave back the pledge-money that had been given him to bind the bargain, and absolutely refused to go. He had heard that there were disturbances on the river. Appeal, argument, money, all had no effect, all that we could get out of the man was a significant drawing of the finger around the throat as indicating the fate of anyone who dared to go that way. All that Mr. Wiersum could do was to reverse his plans and start with the English steamer and go to Kut as he did. The disturbances were

of no great account, as was learned afterward. A disaffected sheikh had attacked a boat load of pilgrims, robbed them and killed one of their number. These disturbances are chronic in that section of the country, especially when the river begins to rise, when the Turkish soldiers are at a disadvantage because they cannot follow the marauders, who use small boats by means of which they can slip through narrow channels or glide over marshes that have only a few inches of water. The Turkish government is trying to reduce these restless elements, but there remains much to be done. Mr. Wiersum will write the next quarterly letter from here and relate his experiences on this tour.

*Colporters
Work.*

The colportage of the Station is going on as usual except that this year I have one man less to work with, having been compelled to dismiss one. This season of the year is best suited for touring, and the available man for this work is being and will be sent regularly to the nearby places. The Bible woman continues to make her visits in the homes of the people, and finds much encouragement in her work. She meets with practically no opposition, on the other hand, is usually asked to repeat her visits for the purpose of reading the Bible and for prayer. The Arabic and English services are kept up regularly whether few come or many. The attendance at the English services has been small, but we expect to continue them nevertheless, and offer this means of grace to those who are desirous of availing themselves of the opportunity.

The year of the interruption of the medical work is gradually slipping by. I say gradually because of the seriousness of the work. If I regard merely the time I must say rapidly for six months have already gone and in another six months we expect Dr. and Mrs.

*Waiting for the
Medical Missionaries.*

Worrall to reopen the dispensary. It is hoped that a shutting down of this work will not be necessary again, and this hope is not unfounded as we grow stronger numerically in our medical staff as well as the clerical. Just at present we feel the absence of the doctor more than ever as there has been no western doctor in Busrah for some months. Fortunately there has been no immediate need of one and I trust the Lord will preserve us as he has done in the past.

BAHREIN.

DR. S. J. THOMS.

As I begin to write I hear a Fakir in a mosque near by calling at the top of his voice to all who can hear for eight rupees and twenty pice. He has been at this almost a week and we wonder how much longer he will hold out. He begins before sunrise and we still hear him when we go to bed. Many people are foolish

A Fakir.

enough to give him money, and he is thereby encouraged to continue in this persistent manner. Another Fakir in the bazaar has been asking for a much larger amount, and includes in his request the gift of a slave to cook his food and attend to his wants. Many of these fellows amass fortunes, which they bury in the ground, and sometimes these are found after their death; but more often they are never found. They are looked upon by many as saints, but unless fanaticism is a qualification of a saint these fellows could be called almost anything else.

*Attempted Murder
in a Mosque.*

I was called up early this morning to dress the wounds of a man who had been stabbed in a mosque ("House of God"). Although "Islam" means peace, this is the fruit of the system. Not by name but "by their fruit ye shall know them," and it is our privilege to preach Christ, the Prince of Peace, to them and to tell them of the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." Will you remember us very earnestly in your prayers that we may be faithful to the many opportunities of service which we have, surrounded as we are by sin of every description, darkness and superstition.

Our school is prospering and some of the more faithful of the pupils are showing very encouraging results of the efforts put

The School.

forth. Mr. and Mrs. Zwemer and the Arabic teacher divide their time in the school. So far only a morning session is held, but we have fond prospects of extending the influence of the school as the opportunities offered become more generally known among the people.

Mr. Moerdyke is busy with the mysteries and difficulties of the language, and if faithful work means the accomplishment of the object sought after, we bespeak for him great success.

The medical work has been most wonderfully blessed. We are treating, on an average, about fifty patients a day, and doing three or four operations. Some of the most satisfactory operations are those for cataracts, of which we have performed seven,

Healing. for they come here blind and go away seeing—

but what is this compared to that privilege of giving them the Light of the World, Jesus. During the last four weeks we have treated over twelve hundred patients and done a goodly number of operations. As we have no assistance, except an uneducated native, you will understand how busy we are. When the men leave for the pearl fields we will probably get a breathing-spell. We are improving this glorious opportunity of presenting the Gospel to the people who assemble here for treatment each day, as best we can. As most patients bring with them a friend or two, you see the Gospel is preached to a great many

Preaching. more than are treated. A large crowd is assembled by seven-thirty in the morning, when the

Word is generally read by Mr. Zwemer, who explains what he has read and offers prayer with them for the poor and sick who have gathered for treatment, and that the seed sown may find lodgement in good ground and bring forth a bountiful harvest, also that those who know the truth may be given strength and courage to testify before men and stand by their convictions. By the time this crowd has been treated a new crowd has gathered, and we stop work to have the Word read and explained and prayer offered again, this time generally by Gabriel, a former colporter, now my assistant. The Moslems, you know, recognize nearly all the true prophets but include, also, Mohammed, Alexander the Great and many others as prophets of God. Mohammed, being the last, is considered the greatest, and his teaching abrogates all the others. The Koran also calls Christ the "Spirit of God" and the "Word of God," and testifies to His ascension. Gabriel's favorite line of argument is: granting all these men as prophets of God, Christ being the Spirit of God and the Word of God, and the only One Who never sinned and Who ascended into heaven, from whence He came, He is the only one who can intercede for us. The people generally listen very attentively and seem to be rapidly becoming more tolerant.

*Ameen,
the Exile.*

We received, by this mail, a letter from the "Exiled Convert," and also one from one of the missionaries regarding him. He says, in part : "His position is very trying. He does not dare to attend church, to mingle with Christians, except clandestinely, or even to read his Bible openly. . . . The government gives him nothing, although it is the rule to pay people who are banished something for their support. After much petitioning the municipality decided



FAMILY OF AMEEN THE EXILE.

to give him three piastres a day, but they do not give it because he is a Christian. He has applied for some sort of work by which he could earn something, but that is refused him ; so he is in straits all the time. Poor fellow !" As you know, his family is with us, and I am sending a picture of them, with a recent convert who is also living in the mission house. Nejima, the ten-year-old little girl, is Frances' little nurse, attends the mission school and progresses very rapidly in both English and Arabic studies. The two little boys are also in the school.

MRS. S. M. ZWEMER.

*Work for
Women.*

This has been chiefly among the poorer classes and not many wise not many mighty and not many noble have been visited, because the common people receive us gladly as they did the Master of old. However, a few of the aristocracy have welcomed us to their houses, but they cannot return the calls because they do not visit but remain in their houses year in and year out. One day a nicely dressed woman came to the dispensary to ask Mrs. Thoms for medicine for her daughter's eyes; the girl being unmarried and belonging to the better class was not allowed to go outside for fear she might be seen and recognized by a man, so I went along with the doctor, taking my bag of books, gospels and tracts. Some of the rooms in the house were specially grand, but the surroundings, the courtyard and details of the house were very bad and untidy. The wife is a pretty Arab woman and received us

*Visiting
Arab Homes.*

cordially; the girl's eyes were examined, and half a dozen other girls and women asked for treatment but none were seriously affected with any ailment. They entertained us with tea and coffee, I read a little, they looked at the books but did not offer to buy, but as one girl was a good reader I gave her a copy of Genesis and hope it may open the way for something more. They asked us to come again. From there we went to a very different kind of case. A long, hot walk led to a poor mat hut, with a door about three feet high through which we crept, and lying in a dark corner was a very sick girl, (a tiny smoking lamp was lighted before we could distinguish anything). The poor thing seemed very near the end, but perhaps she

*In the
Dark Valley.*

may recover, for it is indeed a "dark valley" the Moslim women enter at the time of death: Christless, and therefore hopeless. A number of new huts and houses have been visited this last quarter, usually there are from five to fifteen women in the audience; it is difficult to read to them for any length of time because they comment on the book or the words to each other, and I have to read at the top of my voice so as to be heard above the tumult. Many women have come to the mission house, some of them ask for music and singing, and I hope the words as they are simply explained may find a place in some heart.

*A
Sewing Class.*

A few weeks ago a sewing class was commenced on the afternoon of each Tuesday, seven came the first week and twelve the next, and I had a good time reading and explaining to them ; they seem to catch a good deal of the meaning, but only the Holy Spirit can drive in the seed of the Word. Such dense ignorance of things spiritual is not at all realized by Christians in the home land, who from the cradle have been accustomed to the sound of spiritual truths. The two women in our house and the children receive some instruction daily by attending morning prayers in Arabic and also twice a week attend a Bible class led by Mr. Zwemer. Before putting down this report of work done and the vast quantity left undone please pray for the women of Bahrein, for those visited or who come to the dispensary, also specially for the two in our house that they truly may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world to their sisters on this island.

*Helping Together
with Prayer.*

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Arabia

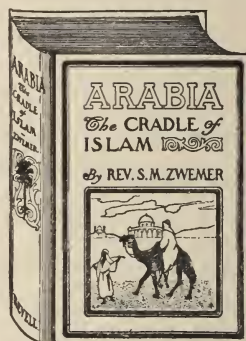
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